



2002

# Tribute to Joseph Webb McKnight

Charles O. Galvin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr>

---

## Recommended Citation

Charles O. Galvin, *Tribute to Joseph Webb McKnight*, 55 SMU L. Rev. 7 (2002)  
<https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol55/iss1/3>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at SMU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in SMU Law Review by an authorized administrator of SMU Scholar. For more information, please visit <http://digitalrepository.smu.edu>.

# TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH WEBB M<sup>c</sup>KNIGHT

*Charles O. Galvin\**

IT has been my very great pleasure to know Professor Joseph Webb M<sup>c</sup>Knight from the time of his first joining the faculty of the SMU Law School in 1955. Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to honor this distinguished colleague.

Joe's contributions to the law and legal education are many and varied. He is an excellent teacher; his broad range of knowledge makes his classes especially enjoyable. His research and writings are most impressive. Among his published articles are many concerning the history and influence of Spanish law upon the legal system of Texas. Indeed, if compiled in a single set of materials, these articles constitute one of the best sources of the history of Texas law. Thus, the development of the law of adoption, independent administration of estates, and community property have been but a few of Joe's areas of inquiry.

His interest in legal history has prompted his collection of about 5,000 rare and historical law books and manuscripts. As a member of the board of trustees of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society, he is presently working on a major contribution to the history of the early years of the Supreme Court.

His contribution to the law of the family in Texas has been a signal achievement. Along with Louise Raggio, a SMU Law alumna, and other members of the bar, Joe became a principal drafter of the Texas Family Code in the 1960s and its various later amendments. This effort standing alone would accord him a place in the pantheon of great legal scholars and contributors to the living law of Texas.

When I first became dean in 1963, Joe provided splendid leadership in the Law School's Legal Aid Clinic. From these beginnings, the clinic developed into not only a major teaching experience for our students but also a facility for substantial assistance to countless members of the community unable to afford legal representation. The clinic became a forerunner of organized legal services having public financial support such as Legal Services of North Texas.

Faculties often struggle with the question of tenure for a particular candidate. The criteria are: (1) excellence in teaching, (2) research and published writings, and (3) significant contributions to the organized profession of which one is a part. A new member of the teaching profes-

---

\* Former Dean, SMU School of Law; Distinguished Professor of Law, Emeritus, SMU; Centennial Professor of Law, Emeritus, Vanderbilt University.

sion would find inspiration in reviewing Joe's dossier and how he met these criteria so abundantly and so continuously.

On the occasion of Joe's seventy-fifth birthday celebration (actually observed one year later), I extended to him my affectionate and warmest regards with the following doggerel:

Here's to Joseph Webb M<sup>c</sup>Knight,  
His splendid scholarship, 'tis all upright.  
In class all students he does excite  
So well that some may need an aconite.  
His comments many are never trite.  
The Texas leg he put aright  
And brought Family Code to broad daylight.  
His virtues noble we all recite  
And on this special day we expedite  
Stacks of greetings 'til out of sight.  
Right on, Joe!